Citizenship and community

Liberals, radicals and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931

Edited by

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Contents

Introduction: Citizenship, liberty and community

Eugenio F. Biagini

I

In 1883 the radical journalist W. E. Adams described community self-government and community representation as 'the essence of all political liberalism that is worthy of the name'.[1] His comment may serve as an opening statement for the present book. In contrast with the old Thatcherite or 'Newt Gingrichite' stereotypical image of 'Victorian values' – meaning individualism, self-help and *laissez-faire* – and the endorsement of similar myths by some socialist historians,[2] we elaborate on the thesis that politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ' was not primarily about the individual's rights, but the representation of his community'.[3] The following chapters focus on the tension between concern for individual liberty and commitment to 'community': the latter included the citizen's 'organic' connections and the collective identities underpinning them.[4] In particular, we suggest that 'community' was a crucial concept for both 'advanced Liberals' and supporters of other 'currents of radicalism' with which liberalism was allied, for example, free traders, revivalist dissenters, Celtic nationalists and activists in the women's movement.

This area has long called for a comprehensive reassessment for, though the relationship between liberalism, democracy and community ideolo-

I would like to thank the contributors to the present volume as well as Jeremy Adelman, Stefan Collini, Margot Finn, Molly Green, Peter Lake, William Lubenow and Alastair Reid for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this introduction. While the preparation of this work has involved a considerable degree of discussion and cooperation among the authors, this introduction reflects only the editor's opinions and is not intended as a collective statement.

[1] 'Franchise at Last', *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 12 February 1883, p. 2.

[2] Cf. T. C. Smout (ed.), *Victorian Values*, Oxford, 1992; and J. Walvin, *Victorian Values*, London, 1988.

[3] M. Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics, 1867–1939*, Oxford, 1993, p. 5; E. F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–1880*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 313–68.

[4] Cf. J. Harris, chapter 14 below, p. 343–60.

gies has generated a great deal of theoretical discussion,[5] it has not yet received sufficient attention from historians.[6] Thus, very few studies explore the links between community-centred liberalism and free-trade economics in the Victorian and Edwardian United Kingdom. Even fewer works approach that most important and controversial form of communitarian ideology – Celtic nationalism – within the broader context of the radical–democratic tradition of the British Isles. Rather, the prevailing tendency has been to look on the separatist movements in Ireland, Scotland and Wales as fairly distinct forces,[7] ignoring the strong affinities existing both among them individually, and between them as a whole and the main 'currents' and traditions of British radicalism. Yet, this 'common ground' is of crucial importance for understanding the successful working of multinational 'coalition' parties, such as Gladstone's and Asquith's Home Rule alliance or the early Labour Party.

The proposed approach also involves a reflection on basic methodological assumptions for, while there is a strong trend towards comparative history in the field of European studies, the component parts of the United Kingdom are still studied from either a strictly 'national' perspective or one which is dominated by the *English* case. In contrast, we argue that – especially in the case of radical politics – a more sophisticated approach is necessary to account for the plurality of identities and experiences in a multinational context unified by a shared institutional framework. The present volume tries to move in that direction with a combination of general chapters on topics of particular relevance and in-depth case studies. Starting with J. S. Mill's emphasis on 'community' as the historical and moral environment in which civil liberties flourish,[8] we explore the relationship between classical ideals and actual politics, democracy and religion, free-trade economics and collective control, ethnic identity, nationalism and their 'invention' by intellectuals – who often were outsiders. Drawing on the 'currents of radicalism' thesis,[9] we focus on both religion and 'civic virtue' as the main factors of collective identity, as well as the means whereby the opposing claims of individual liberty and duty to one's community could be harmonised.

[5] Cf. A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London, 1981; J. Gray, *Liberalism. Essays in Political Philosophy*, London, 1989; W. Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford, 1989; S. Macedo, *Liberal Virtues. Citizenship, Virtue and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism*, Oxford, 1990; C. Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven. Progress and its Critics*, New York and London, 1991.

[6] With few exceptions: *e.g.* E. and S. Yeo, 'On the Uses of "Community": from Owenism to the Present', in S. Yeo (ed.), *New Views on Co-operation*, London, 1988, pp. 229–58.

[7] See, however, C. H. Williams (ed.), *National Separatism*, Cardiff, 1982; and I. S. Wood (ed.), *Scotland and Ulster*, Edinburgh, 1994.

[8] See below, chapter 1, pp. 21–44.

[9] E. F. Biagini and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism. Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour, and Party Politics in Britain, 1850–1914*, Cambridge, 1991.

II

The task of reconciling liberty and community, individual rights and social control turned out to be simpler in Britain than anywhere else in Europe, with the exception of Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries, with their original experiments in, respectively, cantonal federalism and Lutheran social democracy. But in most other cases including Ireland – especially with the rise of ethnic nationalism – liberal and labour reformers struggled with problems and contrasting demands and values for which there were probably neither solutions nor possibilities of reconciliation.[10]

Part I outlines what can be seen as the 'classical' radical liberal positions in both politics and religion, including Mill's 'civic virtue', the campaigns for women's emancipation and the crusades for spiritual freedom and church disestablishment. The first chapter traces the intellectual origins of Gladstonian 'rational-charismatic' politics in Mill's understanding of ancient democracy.[11] In the fourth John Coffey explores the parallels between charismatic, American-style religious revivalism in 1873–5 and the mobilisation of popular enthusiasm for political purposes during the 1876 Bulgarian Agitation. It is difficult to imagine two men more different than Mill, the sophisticated intellectual, and Moody, the down-to-earth populist preacher. Arguably, the latter's anti-intellectualism could hardly appeal to sophisticated Millite philosophers. Yet, in the specific historical context of Britain in the early 1870s, these differences did not rule out an 'elective affinity' in practical politics, or a common ground between their respective positions.[12] The chapters by Pugh and Thane on the women's movement, and by Machin on the disestablishment question further examine the Liberal understanding of citizenship.[13] Pugh and Thane assess the substantial ideological affinities between early feminism and classical liberalism, in a context which included suffragism's nonconformist revivalist style and mentality[14] and systematic attacks on 'the centralized power of the state'.[15] In discussing

[10] See below, chapters 10 and 11.

[11] See chapter 1, below.

[12] It is worth remembering that the equally large differences between Mill and Lincoln had not prevented the former from admiring and supporting the latter in 1861–5. (Interestingly enough, both Moody and Lincoln had been shaped by Illinois democratic society: see below, p. 102 and n. 66.)

[13] Cf. pp. 45–92 and 120–47 below.

[14] Cf. Thane, pp. 66–92 below. George Lansbury described suffragist meetings in 1913 as 'more like a religious revival than anything else': cited in Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy. Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain 1900–1918*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 128.

[15] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860–1914*, Princeton, 1987, p. 227.

the search for new forms of democracy – inspired by a sort of 'free-market equality' in religious and gender issues – these chapters explore some of the limits of late-Victorian liberalism: such was, for example, the ultimate incompatibility between regarding citizens as 'political consumers', and the emphasis on civic virtue and participatory citizenship.[16] By confirming the continuing importance of religion and the crucial role played by intellectuals in deciphering and articulating popular protest, they link up with both Part II (the role of religion and intellectuals in the development of Liberal and Labour free trade), and Part III (the impact of idealist philosophy and organicist views of society on liberalism and early Labour).

Part II extends this analysis to the social and economic sphere. Again, we deal first of all with a 'classical' position – based on the idea of informed consumer control. Nigel Scotland,[17] examining the agricultural workers' commitment to land reform, links revivalist dissent with popular 'communitarian' traditions, including Owenism, and stresses the importance of free-trade principles in popularising the transition from classical liberalism to forms of collectivism. Jonathan Spain,[18] focusing on borough opinion, shows that from the late 1870s urban support for Cobdenite principles increased in response to the new economic pressures at the onset of the 'Great Depression'. Anthony Howe[19] and Frank Trentmann[20] analyse the reshaping of the free-trade ideology under the impact of class issues and consumerist concerns after 1885: they underline the economic and political novelty of the creed which Liberals, Radicals and Labour conveniently cloaked in the Cobdenite rhetoric of the 'hungry forties', though the expression 'free trade' had begun to mean different things to different people.

During the period 1878–1932 the debate about free trade increasingly provided an opportunity to agitate or oppose forms of political and economic nationalism. As Spain demonstrates, the 1878 Cattle Diseases Bill – denounced by the free-trade lobby as a device to protect the 'agricultural interest' at the consumers' expense – also had wide-ranging implications on British trade policies and international treaties. Defeated in 1878, from 1880 the 'fair traders' and, later, the 'tariff reformers' launched a series of new campaigns which reached a climax in the aftermath of the Boer War, achieved substantial success during the First World War, and finally triumphed in 1931–2, in the wake of the Great

[16] D. Marquand, *The Unprincipled Society*, London, 1988, pp. 29–30.
[17] Cf. chapter 6, pp. 151–67 below.
[18] Cf. chapter 7, pp. 168–92 below.
[19] Cf. chapter 8, pp. 193–218 below.
[20] Cf. chapter 9, pp. 219–50 below.

Slump. The latter, as Trentmann writes, 'dug the grave of free trade [but] did not kill it. Free trade, as a secular religion, had died a slow death in previous decades.'[21] Significantly, throughout this period, protectionist revivals coincided with outbursts of xenophobia or imperialism. Both Howe and Trentmann deal extensively with the incompatibility between free-trade liberalism (in its Cobdenite, Gladstonian and Hobsonian manifestations) and the new and more aggressive imperialism which began to spread from the late 1870s – a clash whose full implications became evident in 1916–31.

The nuanced support for 'free trade' that most 'currents of radicalism' expressed throughout the period reflected a parallel kind of community identity. It was based on perceived material interests (most vocally expressed by the consumers' cooperatives) and a Cobdenite and Hobsonian 'internationalist' vision of progress; the latter was equally opposed to both economic autarky and 'monopolistic' capitalism. These values and ideas provided the campaigns against resurgent protectionism with a moral and quasi-religious emphasis which helped to preserve 'free trade' as a component of the tradition of civic-virtue liberalism until the 1920s. It is significant that many of the persons and groups discussed in Part I, including the women's movement[22] and the nonconformists,[23] also figured prominently in these 'free-trade' crusades. Moreover, we find a close interaction between intellectuals and mass politics, as the former played a crucial role in articulating and directing popular protest. From the 1910s their radical vision came under pressure, with growing tensions between 'liberty' and public control: hostility to foreign cartels gradually became a form of economic nationalism, replacing the old uncompromising internationalism of the Cobdenite school. This culminated in a reformulation of the basic assumptions behind the old free-trade 'moral economy'.[24]

Economic and social challenges did not prove as formidable as those posed by Celtic separatist nationalism, with whose various manifestations Liberals and Radicals struggled to come to terms from the early 1880s. The 'currents of radicalism' discussed in the first two parts of the book shared an *internationalist* ideology and *Weltanschauung*: substantially inspired by Christian and Enlightenment humanism, this frame of mind was hardly compatible with ethnic nationalism or economic autarky. Part III assesses the difficulties experienced by radical agitators (both Liberal

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 248.
[22] See chapters 2 and 3 below, pp. 45–65 and 66–92 respectively.
[23] S. E. Koss, '1906: Revival and Revivalism', in A. J. Morris, (ed.), *Edwardian Radicalism 1900–1914*, London, 1974, pp. 76, 86, 91.
[24] For the 'moral economy' of free trade see Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, pp. 93–102.

and Labour, British and Irish) in contexts increasingly dominated by sectarian strife or endemically anti-liberal, anti-socialist Irish Catholicism. Nevertheless, in Britain radical democracy was reconciled with the new demands for ethnic revival: in an interesting contrast with the Irish cases discussed by Greenlee and Fitzpatrick,[25] Richard Lewis and John Shaw[26] examine the success of a Liberal-oriented, town-manufactured 'Celtic' movement in exploiting the myths of a bucolic 'golden age' in predominantly Protestant Wales and the Presbyterian Scottish Highlands.

Both the Highland Gaelic mythology and the Welsh 'democratic community' were largely inspired by various forms of philosophical idealism and historical criticism which were then becoming increasingly influential in the main university institutions of both Scotland and Wales. In a sense, idealism and Celtic nationalism were on the same conceptual wavelength: both shared an organicist view of society, which set them apart from the various kinds of utilitarian individualism of the Millite political economists,[27] but which was being increasingly adopted by both New Liberals and Labour leaders.[28]

The book opens with the commitment to active citizenship of J. S. Mill and the nonconformists, and their awareness of their responsibility to the nation: they insisted on the importance of being rooted in a moral community, championing public issues and giving people a sense of civic responsibility and vocation. The last two chapters of Part III further develop aspects of Part I by examining a later generation of intellectuals who – influenced by German scholarship – elaborated the community theme in regional contexts dominated by ethnic/religious forms of identity. The book closes with Jose Harris's discussion of British sociological organicism at the beginning of the twentieth century. This chapter is, in a sense, a sequel to E. P. Thompson's 'peculiarities of the English' in its critique of historical interpretations based on continental models. As Thompson rejected the reductionism of the Anderson and Nairn model, so Harris criticises the assumption that British progressivism was undermined by underdeveloped sociological thinking, i.e. in contrast with the 'sophistication' of the French, German and Italian social sciences. It was

[25] Cf. chapters 10 and 11 below.

[26] Cf., respectively, chapters 12 and 13 below.

[27] Cf. J. Lipkes, 'Politics, Religion and the Fate of Classical Political Economy: John Stuart Mill and His Followers, 1860–1875', Princeton University Ph.D. dissertation, 1995. Mill's own position was, however, more complicated, and the younger generation of economists showed marked tendencies towards forms of organicism from the early 1870s: cf. *Alfred Marshall's Lectures to Women*, edited and introduced by G. Becattini, Eugenio Biagini, Rita McWilliams Tullberg and Tiziano Raffaelli, London, 1995.

[28] D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900–1918*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 26.

not a question of sophistication: indeed, 'a great deal of innovative theorising about modern societies was in fact occurring in many different contexts', though 'not necessarily under the label of academic sociology'.[29] From this point of view the distance between Britain and the continent was not considerable.

Even at the level of policy recommendations liberal and democratic intellectuals across Europe showed substantial affinities in their adoption of the 'progressive' or 'revisionist' turn, as well as in their support for various versions of free trade. However, these ideas found different applications in different countries because of the diversities in the political and institutional systems and in the pace and timing of the process of industrialisation. Likewise, divergences in the relations between liberalism and labour were due more to the specificity of national history and context than to substantial differences in liberal ideology.[30]

The institutional and cultural constraints peculiar to each country contributed to defining not only policy-making and traditions in the social sciences, but also the role and functions of the intellectuals. Indeed, the very concept of an 'intellectual' was different. It is difficult to generalise: between continental countries there were differences as important as those between 'the continent' and Britain. Yet, arguably, in some cases the seemingly greater radicalism and higher profile of continental intellectuals, and their emphasis on the elaboration of highly abstract ideas, were due to their greater isolation from the centres of political power; their status as a special category, as 'intellectuals', was a function of their impotence.[31] But ideas and debates were broadly similar: in Italy, for instance, the environment in which modern social theory developed owed much to the long battle between organicist 'Hegelian liberals' and empiricist Cobdenite economists, in a context in which most intellectuals, including Mosca and Pareto, were basically excluded from the political elites they so effectively criticised.[32] On the other hand, in the case of Germany and France,[33] as well as in that of Italy, *sociological* thinking had institutional links with newly established regimes eager to strengthen their legitimation.

[29] See below, ch. 14, p. 344. Cf. R. A. Fletcher, 'Cobden as Educator: the Free Trade Internationalism of Eduard Bernstein, 1899–1914', *American Historical Review*, 88, 3 (June, 1983), pp. 561–78; D. Tanner, 'Ideological Debate in Edwardian Labour Politics: Radicalism, Revisionism and Socialism', in Biagini and Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism*, pp. 271–83; P. Spriano, 'Introduzione', to E. Einaudi, *Le lotte del lavoro*, Turin, 1972.

[30] J. Breuilly, *Labour and Liberalism in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Manchester, 1992.

[31] P. Mandler and S. Pedersen, 'The British Intelligentsia after the Victorians', in P. Mandler and S. Pedersen (eds.), *After the Victorians*, London and New York, 1994, p. 2. Cf. E. P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', in *The Poverty of Theory*, London, 1978, pp. 271–3.

[32] Cf. R. Bellamy, *Modern Italian Social Theory*, Oxford, 1987.

[33] See below chapter 14, p. 349.

Moreover it had been shaped by the exceptional social and political experiments involved in the struggle for nation-building (or rebuilding, in the case of the French Third Republic), and influenced by an accelerated process of industrialisation.

From these points of view things were different in Britain. Of course, the 'industrial revolution' there had been a slower, but gradual and precocious phenomenon. Institutional legitimation was not a problem. On the other hand, British intellectuals, especially Oxford and Cambridge dons, had an organic relationship with the ruling elites, who in turn exhibited a greater homogeneity and lack of polarisation.[34] Moreover, the contrast between free-trade utilitarian individualism and idealism was somehow softened by the continuity of an overarching Puritan tradition: this – fully embodied in the philosophies of T. H. Green and Arnold Toynbee, and the economics of Alfred Marshall[35] – added a strongly 'idealistic', community-oriented component to Victorian liberalism. Finally, as Jose Harris shows, continuity was also ensured by the tradition of the study of classics and ancient history, as 'the spell of Plato' and the ideal of the Athenian *polis* continued to influence progressive social thought well into the twentieth century.

III

Of all the questions raised by Jose Harris, that of the closeness of the relationship of British liberalism and progressivism to their continental counterparts is perhaps the most basic. This question seems to admit of – indeed, requires – different answers, according to the particular periods, areas and issues concerned. For instance, during the classical 'liberal age' Gladstone, Cavour and the Belgian Frère-Orban shared a common attitude to the 'concert of Europe', international relations, free trade and nationalism in western Europe. Guizot's and Macaulay's interpretations of history, J. S. Mill's economics and Tocqueville's analysis of contemporary trends in society and politics were widely accepted by liberals throughout Europe and the 'European worlds' overseas – in the Americas and Australasia. Most liberals across Europe had a difficult relationship with Roman Catholicism, despite the efforts of eminent Catholic liberals such as Alphonse de Lamartine, Lord Acton, Alessandro Manzoni and Bettino Ricasoli.

[34] S. Collini, 'Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Britain: An Unknown Species?', British Studies Seminar, Princeton, 2 December 1994.

[35] Cf. E. F. Biagini, 'The Anglican Ethic and the Spirit of Citizenship: the Economic and Social Context', in G. Becattini, E. F. Biagini, T. Raffaelli and R. McWilliams Tullberg (eds.), *Alfred Marshall's Lectures to Women*, pp. 26–46. See also Collini, *Public Moralists. Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1890*, Oxford, 1991, Part I.

Finally, liberals generally shared a concern for the preservation of a limited electoral franchise, the containment of the radical pressure for universal suffrage, and the perpetuation of certain social privileges and inequalities as necessary for the survival of 'liberty'. More particularly, while endorsing the principles of the French Revolution of 1789, continental liberals looked with suspicion or hostility at the heritage of '1793', revived by the 1871 Paris Commune.[36] This suspicion was shared by British liberals as well: indeed Jonathan Parry seems to consider whiggish 'moderation' as the hallmark of true liberalism.[37] However, one reason why Gladstone's and Asquith's Liberal Party survived for so long as the main force of reform and was so effective in steering the Labour Party firmly on to the path of parliamentary democracy was precisely their ability to adopt labour and democratic reforms, even at the cost of painful party splits.[38] On the continent, despite the radicalism of liberal intellectuals, most liberal parties stuck to 'moderation' and were undermined by movements which were fully embedded in a culture of mass politics (though not necessarily of democracy).

The most formidable challenges to liberal democracy – both in continental Europe and the United Kingdom – were offered by both pannationalism and national separatism, with their mutually incompatible claims. Even the Wilsonian–Leninist idea of self-determination proved unable to provide an answer to some of these challenges: in fact, as we now know all too well, in many cases it merely compounded the problem.[39] The Victorian equivalent of the 'fourteen points' – expounded by Gladstone in Midlothian – also proved fairly difficult to operate. Indeed, Home Rule for Ireland – which could be seen as the most consistent development of 'Midlothian liberalism' – was partly undermined by its own logic, when the Protestants in Ulster claimed their right to determine the political allegiance of their own community: a claim which was not without a certain 'nationalist' flavour.[40]

[36] F. Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896*, Bari, 1976, pp. 424–47; cf. J. Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, New Haven and London, 1993, p. 304. To the Hegelian liberal and anti-fascist Guido De Ruggiero hostility to monarchical absolutism and rejection both of Rousseau's 'general will', and later of various forms of collectivism and socialism, were the two sides of the same liberal coin: *Storia del liberalismo europeo*, Bari, 1925, pp. 174–83. Far from sharing the panic of many of his contemporaries, Mill was appalled by the brutality of the suppression of the *Commune* by Thiers (I. Wessel Mueller, *John Stuart Mill and French Thought*, Urbana (Ill.), 1956, p. 225).

[37] Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*.

[38] P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, Cambridge, 1971, and *Liberals and Social Democrats*, Cambridge, 1978; Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*.

[39] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 132–4; H. Grunwald, 'Memorandum to Woodrow Wilson', *Time*, 14 November 1994, p. 104.

[40] Cf. T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, London, 1978, pp. 237–45.

Was there any alternative course that the Liberal Party could have followed? One way to try to answer this question is to look at it in a comparative perspective.

IV

'Make it known that I am shooting all peasants caught carrying arms. Quarter will be given only to regular soldiers. Executions have already begun today.'[41] This was the chilling text of a telegram sent by General Cialdini – an Italian liberal and member of Cavour's majority in parliament – to the governor of Campobasso, a town north-east of Naples, in the then inaccessible hills of Molise. It was 20 October 1860. Italy had become a united kingdom only a few months before. The Piedmontese, fresh from the Austrian battlefields, and incorporating the armies of Tuscany, Emilia and Lombardy, had first proceeded to crush the army of the Pope. The next step had been the annexation of the south. Garibaldi had already defeated the bulk of the Neapolitan army, though the last Bourbon king still hung on with his elite forces. The latter were quickly dispatched by Cialdini. But then the real difficulties began.

Thousands of ex-soldiers from the disintegrated southern army took to the hills to join the 'brigands', the social bandits celebrated by Hobsbawm as 'primitive rebels'.[42] At that time banditry was widespread throughout the Mediterranean basin,[43] and in some cases – as for the Greek *klephts* of the 1820s – had a proto-nationalist flavour, eventually generating real nationalism in a few instances.[44] In the territories of the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies these 'brigands' had always been a power. Though historians have traditionally interpreted banditry in terms of mere social conflict and protest,[45] during the Napoleonic occupation it had played an anti-French – almost proto-national – role, similar to that of the *klephts* in the Ottoman Empire or the guerrillas in contemporary Spain. The perception that the south was 'different' from the north in more than mere socio-economic terms was suppressed by Risorgimento enthusiasts, only to be reaffirmed in the 1860s. Then Italian army officers and northern observers displayed all the vocabulary

[41] Cited in D. Mack Smith (ed.), *The Making of Italy, 1796–1870*, London, 1968, p. 327.
[42] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, Manchester, 1959; and *Bandits*, London, 1969.
[43] Cf. G. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1812–1912*, Oxford, 1987.
[44] E.g. E. M. Edmonds (trans.), *Kolokotrones: the Klepht and the Warrior: An Autobiography*, London, 1892, pp. 83 ff.
[45] Cf. M. Petrusewicz, 'Society against the State: Peasant Brigandage in Southern Italy', *Criminal Justice History*, 8 (1987), pp. 1–20; J. A. Davis, *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth-century Europe*, Basingstoke, 1988, pp. 168–73.

of Victorian racism in their description of the southern 'brigands',[46] while the latter referred to the new authorities as 'the Piedmontese', irrespective of actual regional background: according to them the south was being 'invaded', not 'liberated'.

Whatever weight we may want to ascribe to these pseudo-ethnic prejudices and this proto-nationalist language, the 'brigands' became a force to be reckoned with from 1860, when their military capabilities were reinforced by professionally trained soldiers. As the new nation-state proceeded to enforce its authority, the ranks of the 'brigands' were further swelled by thousands of peasants fleeing from heavy taxation and military conscription. Cialdini's telegram reflected the fact that what had begun as a police operation had escalated into a veritable civil war, which eventually required the mobilisation of up to 100,000 soldiers for four or five years.[47] From Rome, the exiled Bourbons and the Pope lent spiritual, but little material, support to the rebels, and the uprising acquired the character of what nowadays would probably be described as a separatist movement. By 1861 the situation was so dire that Cavour feared that the south would be lost again. It was not, though, and for two main reasons. On the one hand the Italian government was determined to fight to the bitter end, whatever the cost to the state and the civilian population. On the other, the 'primitive rebellion' and its aristocratic patrons in Rome did not manage to produce a viable ideology, and were unable to appeal to either the nobility or the middle classes in the south, who were rallying around the new Italian state. Yet, even after the military power of the brigands was crushed, guerrilla warfare went on for years. More Italian soldiers died in this war than in the three wars of independence put together. Even without international support or legitimation for the 'brigands', the possibility that the Italian government in the south might end up like the Neapolitan Republic of 1799, which had been swept away by an anti-Jacobin 'church and king' *jacquerie*,[48] did not seem unrealistic at the time.[49] After all, Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples had a long unbroken history as independent centralised states, stretching back to the Norman invasion in the eleventh century: none of the 'nation-states' that achieved or claimed independence in nineteenth-century Europe – including Belgium, Greece and Ireland – could boast any comparable record.

Looking at Europe can help us to put the British and Irish problem in context, for what I have briefly illustrated was the Italian equivalent of

[46] J. Dickie, 'Una parola di guerra: l'esercito italiano e il brigantaggio', *Passato e presente*, 26 (1991), p. 59.
[47] Cf. R. Romanelli, *L'Italia liberale*, Bologna, 1979, pp. 29–36.
[48] G. Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, vol. I, *1700–1815*, Milan, 1977, pp. 273–75.
[49] Davis, *Conflict and Control*, p. 175.

'the Irish Question'. In a recent article W. C. Lubenow has observed that 'British Liberals could admire ... nationalism without appreciating the ways in which its central features ran contrary to their own state interests'.[50] In a sense, a similar comment could be applied to Italian liberals, and indeed to liberals elsewhere as well. For instance, there were French versions of the same problem: Thiers, a liberal nationalist, had to struggle tooth and nail with the 1871 Parisian federalists; later the Third Republic had to 'nationalise' the staunchly reactionary peasants,[51] who had forms of collective allegiance different from those of 'the nation', and many of whom did not speak French any more than Calabrian peasants spoke Italian.[52] In the United States, despite greater cultural homogeneity, the Civil War involved contrasting forms of national identity, and nowadays some historians would endorse Gladstone's 1862 statement that Jefferson Davis had 'made a nation'.[53]

The point is that there were – and still are – at least two basic kinds of 'nationalism', whose aims are incompatible. The one seeks the unification of states and regions with similar cultural and historical heritages into a larger 'national-state'; the other seeks the separation of a region or ethnic group from a broader political unit within which the region or group is considered to be 'imprisoned'. From the second half of the nineteenth century both forms of nationalism were *simultaneously* at work, sometimes in the same parts of Europe. Moreover, criteria of legitimacy were changing, as the old right of conquest – for centuries accepted as a valid source of government authority – was being replaced by new ideas of popular sovereignty. These different claims and contrasting sources of legitimacy generated considerable strife and, often, war. The establishment of a viable 'nation-state' was almost invariably accompanied by one side's decisive victory in such civil wars, and by successful propaganda operations which turned the victors' solution into 'the general will'.[54] In other words, it is questionable whether there has ever been a homogeneous 'nation-state', except as the outcome of repression and suppression of pre-existing forms of collective identity: paraphrasing both

[50] W. C. Lubenow, 'The Liberals and the National Question: Irish Home Rule, Nationalism, and their Relationship to Nineteenth-century Liberalism', *Parliamentary History*, 13, Part 1 (1994), p. 129.

[51] E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France*, Stanford (Ca.), 1992.

[52] As late as 1789 50 per cent of the inhabitants of the kingdom of France did not speak French at all, while only 12–13 per cent spoke standard French: E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 60; see also Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, pp. 66–94.

[53] D. A. Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War*, Baton Rouge (La.), 1988.

[54] Y. Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, 1993, p. 3.